

manticore. Dennys (1975) describes how several versions of the beast were granted as badges and supporters to members of the Hastings, Ratclyffe and Babington families, some with tusks, some with horns, and some with monkey's paws, and suggests that it is time they were sorted out. Barnes too (2001) follows up this lead, so we should now restrict the name Manticore to the monster described in the bestiaries, keep the name Man-tyger for the tusked beast used in the Hastings badge (*top right*), and revive the name Babyon (from "baboon") to apply to the Ratclyffe creature with the monkey's paws (*middle right*). It has been suggested that the original sketch for this last creature is the only known portrait of Master Ratclyffe himself - it certainly does not look like a caricature, as do most of these beasts.



Finally, if we take the structure on page 5 and put a man's head in place of the eagle's, we get a new family of creatures. First is the manticore (or man-tyger), followed by a winged manticore, unknown in heraldry but familiar in the ancient Middle East and known to mediaeval misericord carvers (*see No 31*), and then two totally novel beasts, the sea-manticore (*bottom left*) and the winged sea-

manticore (*bottom right*), which are here offered to anybody seeking an original monster for their personal use - provided, of course, that they can find a good enough reason for the adoption.



Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

Number 33 St Augustine's Day* 2003



Dragon inscription from a stone found at Maeshowe in the Orkneys, possibly Viking in origin (from Hitching 1976)

*This is the 6th-7th century Augustine of Canterbury, not the 4th-5th century Augustine of Hippo.

The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

Membership of the College is open to all who believe that the study of dragons and other fabulous beasts is a worth-while activity and not a waste of time. A legal-minded friend has pointed out that, according to the definition of the different classes of membership listed in No 29, all those members named in No 30 now belong in the first class, thus eliminating all class distinctions. This should please egalitarians, and to keep up the good work, we can now name all our new members who have joined since that list was compiled. They are Rosalie Evans, Alex Findlater, David Krause, Rachel Pratt, Tony and Philippa Sims, Nicholas Williams and Anthony Wood. Apologies to Dan Dyoss for spelling his name incorrectly.

Dragon Traces from the Past

So often in life, wherever we go, we find traces of those who have gone before, and this is as true of our researches as it is of our travels. Roger Seabury has kindly lent a couple of books which bear on our studies. The first is **Earth Magic** by Francis Hitching (Cassell, London 1976) which explores the world of megaliths, standing stones, stone circles, tumuli and cairns with their ancient inscriptions including circles, spirals, zigzags and mazes. These have been linked to the old beliefs in dragons and serpents as nature spirits. An elaborate example is seen on our cover, but even spirals and zigzags have been interpreted as simplified snake images, and these seem to be far the most numerous of all these old rock carvings. In contrast, **The View over Atlantis** by John Michell (Sago, London 1969) is mainly concerned with the history of ley-lines and their Chinese equivalents known as “dragon lines.” These are supposedly based on “a gigantic work of prehistoric engineering, the remains of a once universal system of natural magic, involving the use of polar magnetism together with another positive force related to solar energy.” Michell believes that this system was based in the legendary continent of Atlantis whose people were able to manipulate these earthly and cosmic forces, originally to their advantage, but in the end, catastrophically. A chapter on “Paths of the Dragon” describes the archetypal dragon in China as a principle of fertility, responsible for the growth of crops and livestock as well as the natural fecundity of the earth, which early people needed to propitiate in order to ensure their survival. Part of this process was the ritual slaying of the dragon at the end of the fertile season, perpetuated in much folklore, even in Britain, with its later ramifications into heraldry. He quotes Professor Elliot Smith: “The dragon was originally a concrete expression of the divine powers of life-giving, but with the development of a higher conception of religious ideals it became relegated to a baser role, and eventually became the symbol of the powers of evil.” St George has a long pre-history, with Perseus, Theseus, St Michael and many other precursors.

There is much overlap between these two books, though Hitching is more of an investigator and Michell more of a believer. Both assert the great antiquity of dragons.

An Alphabet of Queries (17)

Is the Manticore, Manticora, Mantichor, Mantigre or whatever, a monster of genuine antiquity? This creature does not appear in classical mythology, though man-headed lions are found among the statuary of the ancient Middle East, including the example of the Egyptian Sphinx. The manticore does seem to have been reported by the ancient Greeks as a real animal found in the Indies, maybe a man-eating Tiger



with some of its attributes distorted or exaggerated, and it was included by Pliny the Elder in his *Historia Naturalis* of AD 77 as part of the fauna of India. From there it was taken up into the mediaeval bestiaries as an example of ferocious depravity. Here is a twelfth-century description:-

In India there is a beast called the manticore. It has a triple row of teeth, the face of a man, and grey eyes; it is blood-red in colour and has a lion's body, a pointed tail with a sting like that of a scorpion, and a hissing voice. Its feet are very powerful and it can jump so well that neither the largest of ditches nor the broadest of obstacles can keep it in. (Translated from the Latin, Barber 1992) - see picture above.

Later descriptions replace the scorpion's sting with a cluster of barbs that can be thrown like darts at an enemy (similar to the quills upon the fretful porpentine), and his eyes have turned blue, or maybe red, but in essence this



is the same monster that appears in Topsell's *Historie of Foure-footed Beests* of 1607 (left), and has been much reproduced. In the meantime, it is not surprising that the Tudor heralds, in their trawling through the bestiaries, found some use for the

A Hippogryphical Controversy

Kevin Greaves, writing in *Heraldry in Canada*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, "Winter" 2003 (i.e. February), takes issue with his colleague Darren George over the origin of the Hippogryph, and argues that Ariosto, who apparently invented this monster, was mistaken in asserting that it was the offspring of a gryphon with a filly. In view of Virgil's statement that gryphons and horses were mortal enemies, this seems to have been a wry joke on Ariosto's part (perhaps in the spirit of an April fool), but



Greaves points out that the gryphon is itself the product of an union between an eagle and a lion and is thus a hybrid, and it is generally known that all hybrids are sterile. If this is true, the sterile gryphon could not impregnate a filly. So why is the Hippogryph not the result of an union between an eagle and a mare? Much turns on the ears. Greaves maintains that these must be a recessive genetic character which only manifests when both parents carry the gene, and goes on to advance the view that "DNA research done recently by geneticists at the College of Dracology in Worcestershire, U.K., suggests that this may be so." Since one of our members is a vet in this county, it may be that work has been going on that is yet to be revealed. In the mean time, we can but speculate. One just wonders how it is possible to get a DNA specimen from a figment of the imagination. In geometry we can deal with imaginary circles, so perhaps in biology they have developed techniques for obtaining imaginary DNA. If this is the case, dracology will be able to make significant advances. But back with the evidence, there is an ancient Greek carving of a mother gryphon nursing her baby, so perhaps they were not all sterile hybrids.

FEEDBACK

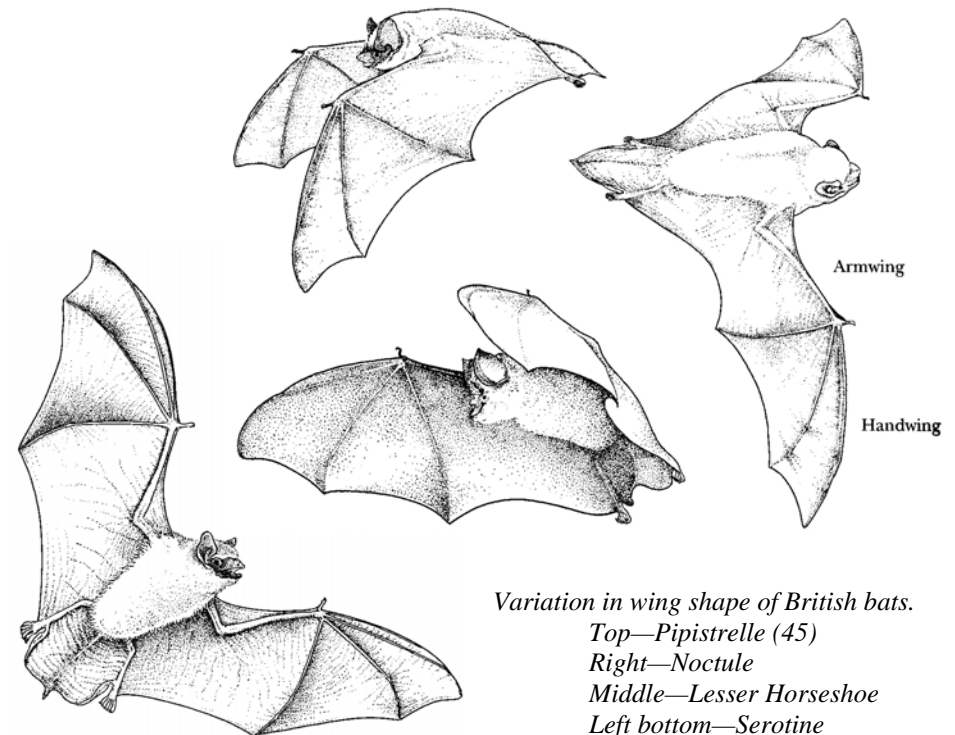
Further to the discussion of the Lamia in No 32, here is the description of her by Keats:-

*She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue:
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd.*

What could an artist make of that?

The Relevance of Bats

A new book just published, **British Bats** by John Altringham (New Naturalist, London 2003), is beautifully written and illustrated, and tells you everything you could possibly want to know about British bats. Bats are the only mammals capable of powered flight, and arguably the most successful and diverse mammals ever to evolve, certainly in terms of sheer numbers. In Britain, one in three of our native land mammals is a bat. They feature largely in folklore, of course, but the reason why we should be interested in them is because so many dragons are said to be bat-winged. So let us look at a few genuine bat wings. These drawings by Tom McOwat show the variety of wing forms in our native bats, all with the same basic structure but differing in their proportions. Perhaps our heraldic and fantasy artists should take a good look at them.



The typical dragon's wing in modern heraldry is not actually very bat-like, being much more robust. A point to investigate is when and why this type of wing began to supplant the feathery type seen in earlier dragons. It may be that it was not bats that inspired the change, but rather the fins of early water-monsters. There is much still to discover.

More on Cubic Symmetry with another family of Fabulous Beasts

With regard to the structure shown in No 27, it should be pointed out that the hexagonal plane that bisects each of the four triple rotational axes of symmetry in the cube (that is, the horizontal plane bisecting the vertical axis in our example), is not itself a plane of symmetry, as what is above the plane is not simply reflected below. Thus the cube has a **centre** of symmetry, thirteen **axes** of symmetry, but only nine **planes** of symmetry. Of course, this in no way affects the threefold development of the family of fabulous beasts, as a further example will demonstrate.

Instead of a horse, let us start with a Lion, another of the Twelve Noble Beasts, indeed, their leader and king. And instead of modifying the head with a horn, let us substitute an eagle's head, leaving the winged and fish-tailed developments unchanged. The first layer of modified creatures now contains a keythong, a winged lion and a sea-lion. Note that the influence of the eagle's head often spreads down to include the fore limbs, while the influence of the leonine body often makes the eagle's head grow ears, and furthermore the influence of the fish-tail can spread upward to make the feet webbed, the mane seaweed-like and the spine sporting a long dorsal fin. The second layer down now sports a griffin, the rare wingless sea-griffin, and the winged sea-lion, converging at the bottom on the winged sea-griffin. Examples of all these beasts may be found in heraldry or its offshoot, the badges used in the armed forces:-

- Lion - the arms of the Earl of Home, and countless others;
- Keythong - badge of John Butler, Earl of Ormond;
- Winged Lion - badge of 836 Squadron Fleet Air Arm;
- Sea-Lion - supporters for Torbay Borough Council, and badge of HMS Sealion;
- Griffin - arms of Griffin, the Irish family;
- Wingless Sea-Griffin - badge of HMS Jutland;*
- Winged Sea-Lion - badge of 847 Squadron Fleet Air Arm (*and see No 15*);
- Winged Sea-Griffin - supporters of Lord Jellicoe and badge of HMS Jellicoe.**

**The badge of HMS Jutland was evidently supposed to commemorate Admiral Jellicoe, the victor of the battle after which the Battle-class destroyer was named, so why did the sea-griffin lose his wings? Perhaps the victor's wreath in the badge left insufficient space for the wings, but in any case this seems to be an unique instance of this particular monster.*

***This badge was designed and approved in 1938 for a new battleship, but before the ship was launched its name was changed to Anson and a new badge devised, so the one with the sea-griffin was never actually used.*

